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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 003240

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DEPT FOR EUR/SE FOR MELINGER, G/TIP FOR DONNELLY

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SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS LINK TRAFFICKING TO PRIVATE
ADOPTIONS IN GREECE

Classified By: Political Counselor Robin Quinville
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (U) This week, Athens police arrested a 41 year-old British woman in connection with the kidnapping of an infant child bed!&!)&! Q) ! 1Q year-old Romanian Roma #iQ,& T(%Q T%e&!g%\$ victim was also arrelT%\$!&4%R !k%Qd!)&).' to police that she (!d "e%f !h%!Q%\$ #QT !b the 14,000 euro that 4(eQQ BRiQil(Q-e!& offered to pay for the !"I& T(e !ale Qe!%ived international pr%QQ !T4%b4)c* 2)! ! "ront-page report in theQ De!e!beQ QQ I&4%Rbational Herald Tribune. Lc!!d (u-!b Q)#h4Q advocates claim that Qh% i*!)\$e&Q)Q Q)%Ply the tip of the i!e"%Ra\$)b Qh!Q 4(%I d%scribe as mostly Roma")a* a"dQ BQ,a!R)!b Rcma women being traffi#)e\$)&Q' ER%&c% 4! 1%,1 their offspring; ab i\$,)!it TR!d% b!Qt%Qed by social stigma !*d Q(% \$!h regulationQ QQ2R%5J\$)ba QQ)2!Te adoptions in Greece. MFA contacts on the trafficking issue have promised to investigate. Embassy will also raise with other officials, underscoring that oversight of private adoptions is also a key component of effective anti-trafficking measures. End summary.

2. (U) On December 19, a 41 year-old British woman was arrested and charged with kidnapping an infant belonging to a 16 year-old Romanian Roma girl. According to press reports, the woman told her 24 year-old Greek boyfriend on the island of Kefalonia in September that she was pregnant and going to England to give birth. However, authorities believe that upon arriving in Athens, she met the pregnant Romanian girl and offered her 14,000 euro to sell her child. After the birth, the British subject snatched the child from her mother and returned to Kefalonia. Upon being presented with the six-month old infant, the boyfriend reportedly refused to believe that he was the father, causing the British woman to take the child to an area hospital for adoption. After reporting the kidnapping to police in Athens, the 16 year-old Romanian mother was also arrested for revealing her intentions to sell the child for 14,000 euro.

COMPLEX SYSTEM DRIVES WOULD-BE
PARENTS TO PRIVATE ADOPTIONS

3. (U) Legal adoption in Greece is extremely difficult and complex. The rules place a heavy burden on adoptive parents, often requiring them to prove land ownership, financial security, an absence of biological children, mental well-being, etc. These and other factors regularly drag the

process out for six to eight years. As a result, many turn to private adoptions, making their own arrangements with a natural mother who is willing to sign away her parental rights. The exchange of money for such a transaction is technically illegal, but human rights advocates maintain that it occurs. Their claim is supported by recent statistics. In 2006, according to official statistics, less than 10 percent of the 603 court-registered adoptions were through official state channels. Attorney Eleni Glegle, a noted human rights advocate in Athens, told the Embassy on December 19 that 99.9 percent of all private adoptions involve the selling of babies.⁸ She claimed that the current market price for girls is 14,000 euro while boys sell for approximately 20,000. Other sources put the prices between 18,000 and 30,000 euro.

¶4. (U) Human rights advocates tell us that some victims are lured to Greece with job offers. Others are given loans in Bulgaria or Romania when mediators see that they are pregnant and later, when they are unable to repay the loan, are pressured to sell their children in settlement of the debt. Still others willingly agree to the sale after promises of large sums in exchange -- but they are frequently sent home on a bus with little or nothing from the mediators who split the fees with obstetricians, midwives and lawyers.

NO CONTROLS ON PRIVATE ADOPTIONS

¶5. (U) Beyond the prohibition of transferring money, there are few, if any, restrictions on private adoptions in Greece. Child advocates claim that the absence of controls over the adoption process makes Greece an ideal trafficking destination for pregnant women whose children can fetch handsome sums for the middlemen who arrange the sales.

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Police sources quoted in the press identify Roma women of Bulgaria, Romania and other Balkan countries as the most frequent victims.

¶6. (U) The Chief of the Athens Police Trafficking in Persons Unit, Lieutenant Colonel Tonia Andreakou told the press that her department traced nine sales of Bulgarian infants in the first half of 2006 and arrested 33 suspected facilitators) 24 Bulgarians, 7 Greeks and 2 Albanians. Among the Greek defendants were doctors and lawyers. Andreakou added that the arrests represent merely a fraction of the real number of cases.⁸ Authorities are also growing concerned with possible trafficking from Albania after the arrest last month of five Albanians for the suspected sale of eight Roma babies.

¶7. (C) In a December 20 conversation with Poloff, Heraklis Moskoff (please protect) of the MFA's International Development Cooperation Directorate (YDAS) and MFA TIP representative admitted that he was unsure of what action that MFA could take to address flaws with the legal process of adoptions in Greece, but advised that he would bring the issue to Secretary General of the MFA, Mr. Charlampos Rokanas, the GoG's TIP Coordinator, as well as to Deputy Foreign Minister Evripidis Stylianidis to see what, if any, steps were possible to address the sale of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma children in Greece. He also stated that he would speak with at least one NGO that deals with child welfare matters to request that they may make an evaluation of the issue and offer suggestions for possible future action.

COMMENT

¶8. (SBU) Many Greeks still attach an enormous social stigma to being adopted. Many parents never reveal to their children that they were adopted and will go to extraordinary lengths to conceal it -- including concocting false medical bills and medical records. Such an attitude makes regulatory

oversight all the more difficult. However, with the international press highlighting poor regulatory oversight of the adoption industry, increased scrutiny will be essential) particularly once Bulgaria and Romania enter the EU on January 1, 2007. Over the past two years, the GoG has made considerable progress on the trafficking issue, including by signing a Child Repatriation Agreement with Albania. The recent arrest cited in the IHT highlights the link between trafficking in persons and weak regulatory oversight of adoptions, usefully identifying another area where targeted GOG action is needed. We will continue to raise this issue with GOG officials, emphasizing the need for legislative remedy and implementation. End comment.
COUNTRYMAN